





POEMS OF PLEASURE



Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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POEMS OF PLEASURE

BY

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ETC.

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PASSIONAL.

POEMS OF PLEASURE.

SURRENDER.

Love, when we met, 'twas like two planets meeting.

Strange chaos followed; body, soul, and heart
Seemed shaken, thrilled, and startled by that greeting.

Old ties, old dreams, old aims, all torn apart
And wrenched away, left nothing there the while
But the great shining glory of your smile.

I knew no past; 'twas all a blurred, bleak waste;

I asked no future; 'twas a blinding glare.

I only saw the present: as men taste

Some stimulating wine, and lose all care,

I tasted Love's elixir, and I seemed

Dwelling in some strange land, like one who dreamed.

It was a godlike separate existence ;
Our world was set apart in some fair clime.
I had no will, no purpose, no resistance ;
I only knew I loved you for all time.
The earth seemed something foreign and afar,
And we two, sovereigns dwelling in a star !

It is so sad, so strange, I almost doubt
That all those years *could be*, before we met.
Do you not wish that we could blot them out ?
Obliterate them wholly, and forget
That we had any part in life until
We clasped each other with Love's rapture thrill ?

My being trembled to its very centre
At that first kiss. Cold Reason stood aside
With folded arms to let a grand Love enter
In my Soul's secret chamber to abide.
Its great High Priest, my first Love and my last,
There on its altar I consumed my past.

And all my life I lay upon its shrine
The best emotions of my heart and brain,
Whatever gifts and graces may be mine ;
No secret thought, no memory I retain,
But give them all for dear Love's precious sake ;
Complete surrender of the whole I make.

THE BIRTH OF THE OPAL.

The Sunbeam loved the Moonbeam,
And followed her low and high,
But the Moonbeam fled and hid her head,
She was so shy—so shy.

The Sunbeam wooed with passion ;
Ah, he was a lover bold !
And his heart was afire with mad desire
For the Moonbeam pale and cold.

She fled like a dream before him,
Her hair was a shining sheen,
And oh, that Fate would annihilate
The space that lay between !

Just as the day lay panting
In the arms of the twilight dim,
The Sunbeam caught the one he sought
And drew her close to him.

But out of his warm arms, startled
And stirred by Love's first shock,
She sprang afraid, like a trembling maid,
And hid in the niche of a rock.

And the Sunbeam followed and found her,
And led her to Love's own feast ;
And they were wed on that rocky bed,
And the dying Day was their priest.

And lo ! the beautiful Opal—
That rare and wondrous gem—
Where the moon and sun blend into one,
Is the child that was born to them.

THE DIFFERENCE.

Passion is what the sun feels for the earth
When harvests ripen into golden birth.

Lust is the hot simoon whose burning breath
Sweeps o'er the fields with devastating death.

Passion is what God felt, the Holy One,
Who loved the world so, He begot his Son.

Lust is the impulse Satan peering in
To Eden had, when he taught Eve to sin.

One sprang from light, and one from darkness grew!
How dim the vision that confounds the two!

TWO LOVES

The woman he loved, while he dreamed of her,
Danced on till the stars grew dim,
But alone with her heart, from the world apart,
Sat the woman who loved him.

The woman he worshipped only smiled,
When he poured out his passionate love.
But the other somewhere, kissed her treasure most rare,
A book he had touched with his glove.

The woman he loved betrayed his trust,
And he wore the scars for life ;
And he cared not, nor knew, that the other was true ;
But no man called her his wife.

The woman he loved trod festal halls,
While they sang his funeral hymn,
But the sad bells tolled, ere the year was old,
For the woman who loved him

THE WAY OF IT.

This is the way of it, wide world over,

One is beloved, and one is the lover,

One gives and the other receives.

One lavishes all in a wild emotion,

One offers a smile for a life's devotion,

One hopes and the other believes.

One lies awake in the night to weep,

And the other drifts off in a sweet sound sleep.

One soul is aflame with a godlike passion,

One plays with love in an idler's fashion,

One speaks and the other hears.

One sobs "I love you," and wet eyes show it,

And one laughs lightly, and says "I know it,"

With smiles for the other's tears.

One lives for the other and nothing beside,

And the other remembers the world is wide.

This is the way of it, sad earth over,
The heart that breaks is the heart of the lover,
And the other learns to forget.
“For what is the use of endless sorrow?
Though the sun goes down, it will rise to-morrow;
And life is not over yet.”
Oh! I know this truth, if I know no other,
That passionate Love is Pain’s own mother.

ANGEL OR DEMON.

You call me an angel of love and of light,
A being of goodness and heavenly fire,
Sent out from God's kingdom to guide you aright,
In paths where your spirits may mount and aspire.
You say that I glow like a star on its course,
Like a ray from the altar, a spark from the source.

Now list to my answer; let all the world hear it,
I speak unafraid what I know to be true :
A pure, faithful love is the creative spirit
Which makes women angels ! I live but in you.
We are bound soul to soul by life's holiest laws;
If I am an Angel—why you are the cause.

As my ship skims the sea, I look up from the deck,
Fair, firm at the wheel shines Love's beautiful form,
And shall I curse the barque that last night went to wreck,
By the Pilot abandoned to darkness and storm ?
My craft is no stauncher, she too had been lost—
Had the wheelman deserted, or slept at his post.

I laid down the wealth of my soul at your feet
 (Some woman does this for some man every day).
No desperate creature who walks in the street,
 Has a wickedder heart than I might have, I say,
Had you wantonly misused the treasures you won,
—As so many men with heart riches have done.

This fire from God's altar, this holy love flame,
 That burns like sweet incense forever for you,
Might now be a wild conflagration of shame,
 Had you tortured my heart, or been base or untrue.
For angels and devils are cast in one mold,
Till love guides them upward, or downward, I hold.

I tell you the women who make fervent wives
 And sweet tender mothers, had Fate been less fair,
Are the women who might have abandoned their lives
 To the madness that springs from and ends in despair.
As the fire on the hearth which sheds brightness around,
Neglected, may level the walls to the ground.

The world makes grave errors in judging these things,

Great good and great evil are born in one breast.

Love horns us and hoofs us—or gives us our wings,

And the best could be worst, as the worst could be best.

You must thank your own worth for what I grew to be,

For the demon lurked under the angel in me.

DAWN.

Day's sweetest moments are at dawn;
Refreshed by his long sleep, the Light
Kisses the languid lips of Night,
Ere she can rise and hasten on.
All glowing from his dreamless rest
He holds her closely to his breast,
Warm lip to lip and limb to limb,
Until she dies for love of him.

PEACE AND LOVE.

There are two angels, messengers of light,
Both born of God, who yet are bitterest foes.
No human breast their dual presence knows.
As violently opposed as wrong and right,
When one draws near, the other takes swift flight.
And when one enters, thence the other goes.
Till mortal life in the immortal flows,
So must these two avoid each other's sight.
Despair and hope may meet within one heart,
The vulture may be comrade to the dove!
Pleasure and Pain swear friendship leal and true:
But till the grave unites them, still apart
Must dwell these angels known as Peace and Love,
For only Death can reconcile the two.

THE INSTRUCTOR.

Not till we meet with Love in all his beauty,
In all his solemn majesty and worth,
Can we translate the meaning of life's duty,
Which God oft writes in cypher at our birth.

Not till Love comes in all his strength and terror,
Can we read other's hearts ; not till then know
A wide compassion for all human error,
Or sound the quivering depths of mortal woe.

Not till we sail with him o'er stormy oceans,
Have we seen tempests ; hidden in his hand
He holds the keys to all the great emotions ;
Till he unlocks them, none can understand.

Not till we walk with him on lofty mountains,
Can we quite measure heights. And, oh, sad truth !
When once we drink from his immortal fountains,
We bid farewell to the light heart of youth.

Thereafter our most perfect day will borrow
A dimming shadow from some dreaded night.
So great grows joy it merges into sorrow,
And evermore pain tinctures our delight.

BLASÉ.

The world has outlived all its passion,

Its men are inane and blasé,

Its women mere puppets of fashion;

Life now is a comedy play.

Our Abelard sighs for a season,

Then yields with decorum to fate.

Our Héloïse listens to reason,

And seeks a new mate.

Our Romeo's flippant emotion

Grows pale as the summer grows old;

Our Juliet proves her devotion

By clasping—a cup filled with gold.

Vain Anthony boasts of his favors

From fair Cleopatra the frail,

And the death of the sorceress savors

Less of asps than of ale.

With the march of bold civilization,
Great loves and great faiths are down-trod,
They belonged to an era and nation
All fresh with the imprint of God.
High culture emasculates feeling,
The over-taught brain robs the heart,
And the shrine now where mortals are kneeling
Is a commonplace mart.

Our effeminate fathers and brothers
Keep carefully out of life's storm,
From the ladylike minds of our mothers
We are taught that to feel is "bad form."
Our worshippers now and our lovers
Are calmly devout with their brains,
And we laugh at the man who discovers
Warm blood in his veins.

But you, O twin souls, passion-mated,
Who love as the gods loved of old,
What blundering destiny fated
Your lives to be cast in this mold?

Like a lurid volcanic upheaval,
In pastures prosaic and gray,
You seem with your fervors primeval,
Among us to-day.

You dropped from some planet of splendor,
Perhaps as it circled afar,
And your constancy, swerveless and tender,
You learned from the course of that star.
Fly back to its bosom, I warn you—
As back to the ark flew the dove—
The minions of earth will but scorn you,
Because you can love.

THE SEA-BREEZE AND THE SCARF.

Hung on the casement that looked o'er the main,
Fluttered a scarf of blue ;
And a gay, bold breeze paused to flatter and tease
This trifle of delicate hue.
“ You are lovelier far than the proud skies are,”
He said with a voice that sighed ;
“ You are fairer to me than the beautiful sea,
Oh, why do you stay here and hide ?
“ You are wasting your life in that dull, dark room
(And he fondled her silken folds),
O'er the casement lean but a little, my Queen,
And see what the great world holds.
How the wonderful blue of your matchless hue,
Cheapens both sea and sky—
You are far too bright to be hidden from sight,
Come, fly with me, darling—fly.”

Tender his whisper and sweet his caress,

Flattered and pleased was she,

The arms of her lover lifted her over

The casement out to sea.

Close to his breast she was fondly pressed,

Kissed once by his laughing mouth;

Then dropped to her grave in the cruel wave,

While the wind went whistling south.

THREE AND ONE.

Sometimes she seems so helpless and so mild,
So full of sweet unreason and so weak,
So prone to some capricious whim or freak ;
Now gay, now tearful, and now anger-wild,
By her strange moods of waywardness beguiled
And entertained, I stroke her pretty cheek,
And soothing words of peace and comfort speak ;
And love her as a father loves a child.

Sometimes when I am troubled and sore pressed
On every side by fast-advancing care,
She rises up with such majestic air,
I deem her some Olympian Goddess-guest,
Who brings my heart new courage, hope, and rest ;
In her brave eyes dwells balm for my despair,
And then I seem, while fondly gazing there,
A loving child upon my Mother's breast.

Again, when her warm veins are full of life,
And youth's volcanic tidal wave of fire
Sends the swift mercury of her pulses higher,
Her beauty stirs my heart to maddening strife,
And all the tiger in my blood is rife;
I love her with a lover's fierce desire,
And find in her my dream, complete, entire,
Child, Mother, Mistress—all in one word—Wife.

INBORN.

As long as men have eyes wherewith to gaze,
 As long as men have eyes,
The sight of beauty to their sense shall be
As mighty winds are to a sleeping sea
 When stormy billows rise.
And beauty's smile shall stir youth's ardent blood
As rays of sunlight burst the swelling bud;
 As long as men have eyes wherewith to gaze.

As long as men have words wherewith to praise,
 As long as men have words,
They shall describe the softly-moulded breast,
Where Love and Pleasure make their downy nest,
 Like little singing birds ;
And lovely limbs, and lips of luscious fire,
Shall be the theme of many a poet's lyre,
 As long as men have words wherewith to praise.

As long as men have hearts that long for homes,

As long as men have hearts,

Hid often like the acorn in the earth,

Their inborn love of noble woman's worth,

Beyond all beauty's arts,

Shall stem the sensuous current of desire,

And urge the world's best thought to something higher,

As long as men have hearts that long for homes.

TWO PRAYERS.

HIS.

Dear, when you lift your gentle heart in prayer,
Ask God to send his angel Death to me
Long ere he comes to you, if that may be.
I would dwell with you in that new life there,
But having, man-like, sinned, I must prepare,
By sad probation, ere I hope to see
Those upper realms which are at once thrown free
To sweet, white souls like yours, unstained and fair.
Time is so brief on earth, I well might spare
A few short years, if so I could atone
For my marred past, ere you are called above.
My soul would glory in its own despair,
Till purified I met you at God's throne,
And entered on Eternities of Love.

HERS.

Nay, Love, not so I frame my prayer to God ;
I want you close beside me to the end ;
If it could be, I would have Him send
A simultaneous death, and let one sod
Cover our two hushed hearts. If you have trod
Paths strange to me on earth, oh, let me wend
My way with yours hereafter : let me blend
My tears with yours beneath the chastening rod.
If you must pay the penalty for sin,
In vales of darkness, ere you pass on higher,
I will petition God to let me go.
I would not wait on earth, nor enter in
To any joys before you. I desire
No glory greater than to share your woe.

SLEEP AND DEATH.

When sleep drops down beside my Love and me,
Although she wears the countenance of a friend,
A jealous foe we prove her in the end.
In separate barques far out on dreamland's sea,
She lures our wedded souls. Wild winds blow free,
And drift us wide apart by tides that tend
Tow'rd unknown worlds. Not once our strange ways blend
Through the long night, while Sleep looks on in glee.

O, Death! be kinder than thy sister seems,
When at thy call we journey forth some day,
Through that mysterious and unatlated strait,
To lands more distant than the land of dreams ;
Close, close together let our spirits stay,
Or else, with one swift stroke, annihilate !

ABSENCE.

After you went away, our lovely room
Seemed like a casket whence the soul had fled.
I stood in awful and appalling gloom,
The world was empty and all joy seemed dead.

I think I felt as one might feel who knew
That Death had left him on the earth alone.
For "all the world" to my fond heart means you,
And there is nothing left when you are gone.

Each way I turned my sad, tear-blinded gaze,
I found fresh torture to augment my grief;
Some new reminder of the perfect days
We passed together, beautiful as brief.

There lay a pleasing book that we had read—
And there your latest gift; and everywhere
Some tender act, some loving word you said,
Seemed to take form and mock at my despair.

All happiness that human heart may know
I find with you ; and when you go away,
Those hours become a winding-sheet of woe,
And make a ghastly phantom of To-day.

LOVE MUCH.

Love much. Earth has enough of bitter in it.

Cast sweets into its cup whene'er you can.

No heart so hard, but love at last may win it.

Love is the grand primeval cause of man.

All hate is foreign to the first great plan.

Love much. Your heart will be led out to slaughter,

On altars built of envy and deceit.

Love on, love on ! 'tis bread upon the water ;

It shall be cast in loaves yet at your feet,

Unleavened manna, most divinely sweet.

Love much. Your faith will be dethroned and shaken,

Your trust betrayed by many a fair, false lure.

Remount your faith, and let new trusts awaken.

Though clouds obscure them, yet the stars are pure ;

Love is a vital force and must endure.

Love much. Mens' souls contract with cold suspicion :
Shine on them with warm love, and they expand.
'Tis love, not creeds, that from a low condition
Leads mankind up to heights supreme and grand.
Oh, that the world could see and understand !

Love much. There is no waste in freely giving ;
More blessed is it, even, than to receive.
He who loves much, alone finds life worth living,
Love on, through doubt and darkness ; and believe
There is no thing which Love may not achieve.

ONE OF US TWO.

The day will dawn, when one of us shall hearken
In vain to hear a voice that has grown dumb.
And morns will fade, noons pale, and shadows darken,
While sad eyes watch for feet that never come.

One of us two must sometime face existence
Alone with memories that but sharpen pain.
And these sweet days shall shine back in the distance,
Like dreams of summer dawns, in nights of rain.

One of us two, with tortured heart half broken,
Shall read long-treasured letters through salt tears,
Shall kiss with anguished lips each cherished token,
That speaks of these love-crowned, delicious years.

One of us two shall find all light, all beauty,
All joy on earth, a tale forever done;
Shall know henceforth that life means only duty.
Oh, God! Oh, God! have pity on that one.

HER REVERIE.

We were both of us — aye, we were *both* of us there,
In the self-same house at the play together,
To her it was summer, with bees in the air —
To me it was winter weather.

We never had met, and yet we two
Had played in desperate woman fashion,
A game of life, with a prize in view,
And oh ! I played with passion.

'Twas a game that meant heaven and sweet home-life,
For the one who went forth with a crown upon her;
For the one who lost — it meant lone strife,
Sorrow, despair, and dishonor.

Well, she won (yet it was not she —
I am told that she was a praying woman :
No earthly power could outwit me —
But her's was superhuman).

She has the prize, and I have — well,
Memories sweeter than joys of heaven ;
Memories fierce as the fires of hell—
Those unto me were given.

And we sat in the self-same house last night ;
And *he* was there. It is no error
When I say (and it gave me keen delight)
That his eye met mine with terror.

When the love we have won at any cost
Has grown familiar as some old story,
Naught seems so dear as the love we lost,
All bright with the Past's weird glory.

And tho' he is fond of that woman, I know—
I saw in his eyes the brief confession—
That the love seemed sweeter which he let go
Than that in his possession.

So I am content. It would be the same
Were I the wife love-crowned and petted,
And she the woman who lost the game —
Then *she* were the one regretted.

And loving him so, I would rather be
The one he let go—and then vaguely desired,
Than, winning him, once in his face to see
The look of a love grown tired.

TWO SINNERS.

There was a man, it was said one time,
Who went astray in his youthful prime.
Can the brain keep cool and the heart keep quiet
When the blood is a river that's running riot?
And boys will be boys the old folks say,
And a man is the better who's had his day.

The sinner reformed; and the preacher told
Of the prodigal son who came back to the fold.
And Christian people threw open the door,
With a warmer welcome than ever before.
Wealth and honor were his to command,
And a spotless woman gave him her hand.

And the world strewed their pathway with blossoms aboom,
Crying "God bless ladye, and God bless groom!"

There was a maiden who went astray
In the golden dawn of her life's young day.
She had more passion and heart than head,
And she followed blindly where fond Love led.
And Love unchecked is a dangerous guide
To wander at will by a fair girl's side.

The woman repented and turned from sin,
But no door opened to let her in.
The preacher prayed that she might be forgiven,
But told her to look for mercy—in Heaven.
For this is the law of the earth, we know:
That the woman is stoned, while the man may go.

A brave man wedded her after all,
But the world said, frowning, "We shall not call."

WHAT LOVE IS.

Love is the centre and circumference;

The cause and aim of all things — 'tis the key
To joy and sorrow, and the recompense
For all the ills that have been, or may be.

Love is as bitter as the dregs of sin,

As sweet as clover-honey in its cell;
Love is the password whereby souls get in
To Heaven — the gate that leads, sometimes, to Hell.

Love is the crown that glorifies; the curse

That brands and burdens; it is life and death.
It is the great law of the universe;
And nothing can exist without its breath.

Love is the impulse which directs the world,

And all things know it and obey its power.
Man, in the maelstrom of his passions whirled;
The bee that takes the pollen to the flower;

The earth, uplifting her bare, pulsing breast
To fervent kisses of the amorous sun;—
Each but obeys creative Love's behest,
Which everywhere instinctively is done.

Love is the only thing that pays for birth,
Or makes death welcome. Oh, dear God above
This beautiful but sad, perplexing earth,
Pity the hearts that know — or know not — Love!

CONSTANCY.

I will be true. Mad stars forsake their courses,
And led by reckless meteors, turn away
From paths appointed by Eternal Forces ;
But my fixed heart shall never go astray.
Like those calm worlds whose sun-directed motion
Is undisturbed by strife of wind or sea,
So shall my swerveless and serene devotion
Sweep on forever, loyal unto thee.

I will be true. The fickle tide, divided
Between two wooing shores, in wild unrest
May to and fro shift always undecided ;
Not so the tide of Passion in my breast.
With the grand surge of some resistless river,
That hurries on, past mountain, vale, and sea,
Unto the main, its waters to deliver,
So my full heart keeps all its wealth for thee.

I will be true. Light barques may be belated,
Or turned aside by every breeze at play,
While sturdy ships, well-manned and richly freighted,
With fair sails flying, anchor safe in Bay.
Like some firm rock, that, steadfast and unshaken,
Stands all unmoved when ebbing billows flee,
So would my heart stand, faithful if forsaken—
I will be true, though thou art false to me.

PHILOSOPHICAL.

RESOLVE.

As the dead year is clasped by a dead December,
So let your dead sins with your dead days lie.
A new life is yours, and a new hope. Remember,
We build our own ladders to climb to the sky.
Stand out in the sunlight of Promise, forgetting
Whatever the Past held of sorrow or wrong.
We waste half our strength in a useless regretting;
We sit by old tombs in the dark too long.

Have you missed in your aim? Well, the mark is still shining.
Did you faint in the race? Well, take breath for the next.
Did the clouds drive you back? But see yonder their lining.
Were you tempted and fell? Let it serve for a text.
As each year hurries by let it join that procession
Of skeleton shapes that march down to the Past,
While you take your place in the line of Progression,
With your eyes on the heavens, your face to the blast.

I tell you the future can hold no terrors

For any sad soul while the stars revolve,

If he will stand firm on the grave of his errors,

And instead of regretting, resolve, resolve.

It is never too late to begin rebuilding,

Though all into ruins your life seems hurled,

For see how the light of the New Year is gilding

The wan, worn face of the bruised old world.

OPTIMISM.

I'm no reformer ; for I see more light
Than darkness in the world ; mine eyes are quick
To catch the first dim radiance of the dawn,
And slow to note the cloud that threatens storm.
The fragrance and the beauty of the rose
Delight me so, slight thought I give its thorn ;
And the sweet music of the lark's clear song,
Stays longer with me than the night hawk's cry.
And e'en in this great throe of pain called Life,
I find a rapture linked with each despair,
Well worth the price of Anguish. I detect
More good than evil in humanity.
Love lights more fires than hate extinguishes,
And men grow better as the world grows old.

PAIN'S PROOF.

I think man's great capacity for pain
Proves his immortal birthright. I am sure
No merely human mind could bear the strain
Of some tremendous sorrows we endure.

Art's most ingenious breastworks fail at length,
Beat by the mighty billows of the sea ;
Only the God-formed shores possess the strength
To stand before their onslaughts, and not flee. .

The structure that we build with careful toil,
The tempest lays in ruins in an hour ;
While some grand tree that springs forth from the soil
Is bended but not broken by its power.

Unless our souls had root in soil divine
We could not bear earth's overwhelming strife.
The fiercest pain that racks this heart of mine,
Convinces me of everlasting life.

IMMORTALITY.

Immortal life is something to be earned,
By slow self-conquest, comradeship with Pain,
And patient seeking after higher truths.
We cannot follow our own wayward wills,
And feed our baser appetites, and give
Loose rein to foolish tempers year on year,
And then cry, "Lord forgive me, I believe,"
And straightway bathe in glory. Men must learn
God's system is too grand a thing for that.
The spark divine dwells in our souls, and we
Can fan it to a steady flame of light,
Whose lustre gilds the pathway to the tomb,
And shines on through Eternity, or else
Neglect it till it glimmers down to Death,
And leaves us but the darkness of the grave.
Each conquered passion feeds the living flame ;
Each well-borne sorrow is a step towards God ;
Faith cannot rescue, and no blood redeem

The soul that will not reason and resolve.
Lean on thyself, yet prop thyself with prayer
(All hope is prayer ; who calls it hope no more,
Sends prayer footsore forth over weary wastes,
While he who calls it prayer gives wings to hope),
And there are spirits, messengers of Love,
Who come at call and fortify our strength.
Make friends with them, and with thine inner self ;
Cast out all envy, bitterness, and hate ;
And keep the mind's fair tabernacle pure.
Shake hands with Pain, give greeting unto Grief,
Those angels in disguise, and thy glad soul
From height to height, from star to shining star,
Shall climb and claim blest immortality.

ANSWERED PRAYERS.

I prayed for riches, and achieved success ;

 All that I touched turned into gold. Alas !

My cares were greater and my peace was less,

 When that wish came to pass.

I prayed for glory, and I heard my name

 Sung by sweet children and by hoary men.

But ah ! the hurts — the hurts that come with fame !

 I was not happy then.

I prayed for Love, and had my heart's desire.

 Through quivering heart and body, and through brain

There swept the flame of its devouring fire,

 And but the scars remain.

I prayed for a contented mind. At length

 Great light upon my darkened spirit burst.

Great peace fell on me also, and great strength —

 Oh, had that prayer been first !

THE LADY OF TEARS.

Through valley and hamlet and city,
Wherever humanity dwells,
With a heart full of infinite pity,
A breast that with sympathy swells,
She walks in her beauty immortal.
Each household grows sad as she nears,
But she crosses at length every portal,
The mystical Lady of Tears.

If never this vision of sorrow
Has shadowed your life in the past,
You will meet her, I know, some to-morrow—
She visits all hearthstones at last.
To hovel, and cottage, and palace,
To servant and king she appears,
And offers the gall of her chalice—
The unwelcome Lady of Tears.

To the eyes that have smiled but in gladness,
To the souls that have basked in the sun,
She seems in her garments of sadness,
A creature to dread and to shun.
And lips that have drank but of pleasure
Grow pallid and tremble with fears,
As she portions the gall from her measure,
The merciless Lady of Tears.

But in midnight, lone hearts that are quaking,
With the agonized numbness of grief,
Are saved from the torture of breaking,
By her bitter-sweet draught of relief.
Oh, then do all graces enfold her ;
Like a goddess she looks and appears,
And the eyes overflow that behold her —
The beautiful Lady of Tears.

Though she turns to lamenting, all laughter,
 Though she gives us despair for delight,
Life holds a new meaning thereafter,
 For those who will greet her aright.
They stretch out their hands to each other,
 For Sorrow unites and endears,
The children of one tender mother
 The sweet, blessed Lady of Tears.

THE MASTER HAND.

It is something too strange to understand,
How all the chords on the instrument,
Whether sorrowful, blithe, or grand,
Under the touch of your master hand
Were into one melody blent.
Major, minor, everything — all —
Came at your magic fingers' call.

Why! famed musicians had turned in despair
Again and again from those self-same keys;
They mayhap brought forth a simple air,
But a discord always crept in somewhere,
In their fondest efforts to please.
Or a jarring, jangling, meaningless strain
Angered the silence to noisy pain.

“Out of tune,” they would frown and say;
Or “a loosened key” or “a broken string;”

But sure and certain they were alway,
That no man living on earth could play
 Measures more perfect, or bring
Sweeter sounds or a truer air
Out of that curious instrument there.

And then you came. You swept the scale
 With a mighty master's wonderful art.
You made the minor keys sob and wail,
While the low notes rang like a bell in a gale.
 And every chord in my heart,
From the deep bass tones to the shrill ones above.
Joined into that glorious harmony — Love.

And now, though I live for a thousand years,
 On no new chord can a new hand fall.
The chords of sorrow, of pain, of tears,
The chords of raptures and hopes and fears,
 I say you have struck them all;
And all the meaning put into each strain
By the Great Composer, you have made plain.

SECRET THOUGHTS.

I hold it true that thoughts are things
Endowed with bodies, breath, and wings,
And that we send them forth to fill
The world with good results — or ill.

That which we call our secret thought
Speeds to the earth's remotest spot,
And leaves its blessings or its woes
Like tracks behind it as it goes.

It is God's law. Remember it
In your still chamber as you sit
With thoughts you would not dare have known,
And yet make comrades when alone.

These thoughts have life ; and they will fly
And leave their impress by-and-by,
Like some marsh breeze, whose poisoned breath
Breathes into homes its fevered breath.

And after you have quite forgot
Or all outgrown some vanished thought,
Back to your mind to make its home,
A dove or raven, it will come.

Then let your secret thoughts be fair;
They have a vital part and share
In shaping worlds and molding fate —
God's system is so intricate.

THERE COMES A TIME.

There comes a time to every mortal being,
 Whate'er his station or his lot in life,
When his sad soul yearns for the final freeing
 From all this jarring and unceasing strife.

There comes a time, when, having lost its savor,
 The salt of wealth is worthless ; when the mind
Grows wearied with the world's capricious favor,
 And sighs for something that it cannot find.

There comes a time, when, though kind friends are thronging
 About our pathway with sweet acts of grace,
We feel a vast and overwhelming longing
 For something that we cannot name or place.

There comes a time, when, with earth's best love by us,
 To feed the heart's great hunger and desire,
We find not even this can satisfy us ;
 The soul within us cries for something higher.

What greater proof need we that we inherit

A life immortal in another sphere ?

It is the homesick longing of the spirit

That cannot find its satisfaction here.

THE WORLD.

With noiseless steps good goes its way ;
The earth shakes under evil's tread.
We hear the uproar, and 'tis said,
The world grows wicked every day.

It is not true. With quiet feet,
In silence, Virtue sows her seeds ;
While Sin goes shouting out his deeds,
And echoes listen and repeat.

But surely as the old world moves,
And circles round the shining sun,
So surely does God's purpose run,
And all the human race improves.

Despite bold evil's noise and stir,
Truth's golden harvests ripen fast ;
The Present far outshines the Past ;
Men's thoughts are higher than they were.

Who runs may read this truth, I say:

Sin travels in a rumbling car,

While Virtue soars on like a star —

The world grows better every day.

NECESSITY.

Necessity, whom long I deemed my foe,
Thou cold, unsmiling, and hard-visaged dame,
Now I no longer see thy face, I know
Thou wert my friend beyond reproach or blame.

My best achievements and the fairest flights
Of my winged fancy were inspired by thee ;
Thy stern voice stirred me to the mountain heights ;
Thy importunings bade me do and be.

But for thy breath, the spark of living fire
Within me might have smouldered out at length ;
But for thy lash which would not let me tire,
I never would have measured my own strength.

But for thine oft-times merciless control
Upon my life, that nerved me past despair,
I never should have dug deep in my soul
And found the mine of treasures hidden there.

And though we walk divided pathways now,
And I no more may see thee, to the end,
I weave this little chaplet for thy brow,
That other hearts may know, and hail thee friend.

ACHIEVEMENT.

Trust in thine own untried capacity
As thou wouldst trust in God himself. Thy soul
Is but an emanation from the whole.
Thou dost not dream what forces lie in thee,
Vast and unfathomed as the grandest sea.
Thy silent mind o'er diamond caves may roll,
Go seek them — but let pilot will control
Those passions which thy favoring winds can be.

No man shall place a limit in thy strength;
Such triumphs as no mortal ever gained
May yet be thine if thou wilt but believe
In thy Creator and thyself. At length
Some feet will tread all heights now unattained —
Why not thine own? Press on; achieve! achieve!

BELIEF.

The pain we have to suffer seems so broad,
Set side-by-side with this life's narrow span,
We need no greater evidence that God
Has some diviner destiny for man.

He would not deem it worth his while to send
Such crushing sorrows as pursue us here,
Unless beyond this fleeting journey's end
Our chastened spirits found another sphere.

So small this world ! So vast its agonies !
A future life is needed to adjust
These ill-proportioned, wide discrepancies
Between the spirit and its frame of dust.

So when my soul writhes with some aching grief,
And all my heart-strings tremble at the strain,
My Reason lends new courage to Belief,
And all God's hidden purposes seems plain.

WHATEVER IS — IS BEST.

I know as my life grows older,
And mine eyes have clearer sight —
That under each rank wrong, somewhere
There lies the root of Right;
That each sorrow has its purpose,
By the sorrowing oft unguessed,
But as sure as the sun brings morning,
Whatever is — is best.

I know that each sinful action,
As sure as the night brings shade,
Is somewhere, sometime punished,
Tho' the hour be long delayed.
I know that the soul is aided
Sometimes by the heart's unrest,
And to grow means often to suffer —
But whatever is — is best.

I know there are no errors,
In the great Eternal plan,
And all things work together
For the final good of man.
And I know when my soul speeds onward,
In its grand Eternal quest,
I shall say as I look back earthward,
Whatever is — is best.

PEACE AT THE GOAL.

From the soul of a man who was homeless
Came the deathless song of home.
And the praises of rest are chanted best
By those who are forced to roam.

In a time of fast and hunger,
We can talk over feasts divine ;
But the banquet done, why, where is the one
Who can tell you the taste of the wine ?

We think of the mountain's grandeur
As we walk in the heat afar —
But when we sit in the shadows of it
We think how at rest we are.

With the voice of the craving passions
We can picture a love to come.
But the heart once filled, lo, the voice is stilled,
And we stand in the silence — dumb.

THE LAW.

Life is a Shylock ; always it demands
The fullest usurer's interest for each pleasure.
Gifts are not freely scattered by its hands ;
We make returns for every borrowed treasure.

Each talent, each achievement, and each gain
Necessitates some penalty to pay.
Delight imposes lassitude and pain,
As certainly as darkness follows day.

All you bestow on causes or on men,
Of love or hate, of malice or devotion,
Somehow, sometime, shall be returned again —
There is no wasted toil, no lost emotion.

The motto of the world is give and take.
It gives you favors — out of sheer goodwill,
But unless speedy recompense you make,
You'll find yourself presented with its bill.

When rapture comes to thrill the heart of you,
Take it with tempered gratitude. Remember,
Some later time the interest will fall due.
No year brings June that does not bring December.

RECOMPENSE.

Straight through my heart this fact to-day,
By Truth's own hand is driven :
God never takes one thing away,
But something else is given.

I did not know in earlier years,
This law of love and kindness ;
I only mourned through bitter tears
My loss, in sorrow's blindness.

But, ever following each regret
O'er some departed treasure,
My sad repining heart was met
With unexpected pleasure.

I thought it only happened so ;
But Time this truth has taught me —
No least thing from my life can go,
But something else is brought me.

It is the Law, complete, sublime ;
And now with Faith unshaken,
In patience I but bide my time,
When any joy is taken.

No matter if the crushing blow
May for the moment down me,
Still, back of it waits Love, I know,
With some new gift to crown me.

DESIRE.

No joy for which thy hungering heart has panted,
No hope it cherishes through waiting years,
But if thou dost deserve it, shall be granted
For with each passionate wish the blessing nears.

Tune up the fine, strong instrument of thy being
To chord with thy dear hope, and do not tire.
When both in key and rythm are agreeing,
Lo! thou shalt kiss the lips of thy desire.

The thing thou cravest so waits in the distance,
Wrapt in the silences, unseen and dumb :
Essential to thy soul and thy existence —
Live worthy of it — call, and it *shall come*.

DEATHLESS.

There lies in the centre of each man's heart,
A longing and love for the good and pure ;
And if but an atom, or larger part,
I tell you this shall endure — endure —
After the body has gone to decay —
Yea, after the world has passed away.

The longer I live and the more I see
Of the struggle of souls toward the heights above,
The stronger this truth comes home to me :
That the Universe rests on the shoulders of love ;
A love so limitless, deep, and broad,
That men have renamed it and called it—God.

And nothing that ever was born or evolved,
Nothing created by light or force,
But deep in its system there lies dissolved
A shining drop from the Great Love Source ;
A shining drop that shall live for aye —
Though kingdoms may perish and stars decay.

KEEP OUT OF THE PAST.

Keep out of the Past ! for its highways
Are damp with malarial gloom ;
Its gardens are sere and its forests are drear,
And everywhere moulders a tomb.
Who seeks to regain its lost pleasures,
Finds only a rose turned to dust ;
And its storehouse of wonderful treasures
Are covered and coated with rust.

Keep out of the Past. It is haunted :
He who in its avenues gropes,
Shall find there the ghost of a joy prized the most,
And a skeleton throng of dead hopes.
In place of its beautiful rivers,
Are pools that are stagnant with slime ;
And these graves gleaming white in a phosphoric light,
Hide dreams that were slain in their prime.

Keep out of the Past. It it is lonely,
And barren and bleak to the view;
Its fires have grown cold, and its stories are old—
Turn, turn to the Present — the New :
To-day leads you up to the hilltops
That are kissed by the radiant sun,
To-day shows no tomb, life's hopes are in bloom,
And to-day holds a prize to be won.

THE FAULT OF THE AGE.

The fault of the age is a mad endeavor
To leap to heights that were made to climb :
By a burst of strength, of a thought most clever,
We plan to forestall and outwit Time.

We scorn to wait for the thing worth having ;
We want high noon at the day's dim dawn ;
We find no pleasure in toiling and saving,
As our forefathers did in the old times gone.

We force our roses, before their season,
To bloom and blossom for us to wear ;
And then we wonder and ask the reason
Why perfect *buds* are so few and rare.

We crave the gain, but **despise** the getting ;
We want wealth — not as reward, but dower ;
And the strength that is wasted is useless fretting
Would fell a forest or build a tower.

To covet the prize, yet to shrink from the winning;
To thirst for glory, yet fear to fight;
Why what can it lead to at last, but sinning,
To mental languor and moral blight ?

Better the old slow way of striving,
And counting small gains when the year is done,
Than to use our force and our strength in contriving,
And to grasp for pleasure we have not won.

DISTRUST.

Distrust that man who tells you to distrust ;
He takes the measure of his own small soul,
And thinks the world no larger. He who prates
Of human nature's baseness and deceit
Looks in the mirror of his heart, and sees
His kind therein reflected. Or perchance
The honeyed wine of life was turned to gall
By sorrow's hand, which brimmed his cup with tears,
And made all things seem bitter to his taste.
Give him compassion ! But be not afraid
Of nectared Love, or Friendship's strengthening draught,
Nor think a poison underlies their sweets.
Look through true eyes—you will discover truth ;
Suspect suspicion, and doubt only doubt.

ARTIST AND MAN.

Make thy life better than thy work. Too oft
Our artists spend their skill in rounding soft
Fair curves upon their statues, while the rough
And ragged edges of the unhewn stuff
In their own natures startle and offend
The eye of critic and the heart of friend.

If in thy too brief day thou must neglect
Thy labor or thy life, let men detect
Flaws in thy work ! while their most searching gaze
Can fall on nothing which they may not praise
In thy well-chiselled character. The Man
Should not be shadowed by the Artisan !

MISCELLANEOUS.

BABYLAND.

Have you heard of the Valley of Babyland,
The realm where the dear little darlings stay,
Till the kind storks go, as all men know,
And, oh, so tenderly bring them away?
The paths are winding and past all finding,
By all save the storks who understand
The gates and the highways and the intricate byways
That lead to Babyland.

All over the Valley of Babyland
Sweet flowers bloom in the soft green moss;
And under the ferns fair, and under the plants there,
Lie little heads like spools of floss.
With a soothing number the river of slumber
Flows o'er a bedway of silver sand;
And angels are keeping watch o'er the sleeping
Babes of Babyland.

The path to the Valley of Babyland
Only the kingly, kind storks know ;
If they fly over mountains, or wade through fountains,
No man sees them come or go.
But an angel maybe, who guards some baby,
Or a fairy perhaps, with her magic wand,
Brings them straightway to the wonderful gateway
That leads to Babyland.

And there in the Valley of Babyland,
Under the mosses and leaves and ferns,
Like an unfledged starling, they find the darling,
For whom the heart of a mother yearns ;
And they lift him lightly, and snug him tightly
In feathers soft as a lady's hand ;
And off with a rockaway step they walk away
Out of Babyland.

As they go from the Valley of Babyland,
Forth into the world of great unrest,

Sometimes in weeping, he wakes from sleeping
Before he reaches the mother's breast.
Ah, how she blesses him, how she caresses him,
Bonniest bird in the bright home band
That o'er land and water, the kind stork brought her
From far off Babyland !

A FACE.

Between the curtains of snowy lace,
Over the way is a baby's face ;
It peeps forth, smiling in merry glee,
And waves its pink little hand at me.

My heart responds with a lonely cry —
But in the wonderful By-and-By —
Out from the window of God's "To Be,"
That other baby shall beckon to me.

That ever haunting and longed-for face,
That perfect vision of infant grace,
Shall shine on me in a splendor of light,
Never to fade from my eager sight.

All that was taken shall be made good ;
All that puzzles me understood ;
And the wee white hand that I lost, one day,
Shall lead me into the Better Way.

AN OLD COMRADE.

All suddenly between me and the light,
That brightly shone, and warm,
Robed in the pall-like garments of the night,
There rose a shadowy form.

“Stand back,” I said ; “ you quite obscure the sun ;
What do you want with me ? ”
“Dost thou not know, then ? ” quoth the mystic one ;
“ Look on my face and see ! ”

I looked, and, lo ! it was my old despair,
Robed in a new disguise ;
In blacker garments than it used to wear,
But with the same sad eyes.

So ghostly were the memories it awoke,
I shrank in fear away.
“Nay, be more kind,” ’twas thus the dark shape spoke,
“ For I have come to stay.

“So long thy feet have trod on sunny heights,
Such joys thy heart has known,
Perchance thou hast forgotten those long nights,
When we two watched alone.

“Though sweet and dear the Pleasures thou hast met,
And comely to thine eye,
Has one of them, in all that bright throng yet,
Been half so true as I ?

“And that last rapture which ensnared thee so
With pleasure twin to pain,
It was the swiftest of them all to go —
But I — I will remain.

“Again we two will live a thousand years,
In desperate nights of grief,
That shall refuse the bitter balm of tears,
For thy bruised heart’s relief.

“ Again we two will watch the hopeless dawn
 Creep up a lonely sky —
Again we’ll urge the drear day to be gone,
 Yet dread to see it die.

“ Nay, shrink not from me, for I am thy friend,
 One whom the Master sent ;
And I shall help thee, ere we reach the end,
 To find a great content.

“ And I will give thee courage to attain,
 The heights supremely fair,
Wherein thou’lt cry, ‘ How blessed was my pain !
 How God sent my Despair ! ’ ”

L. of C.

ENTRE-ACTE REVERIES.

Between the acts while the orchestra played
That sweet old waltz with the lilting measure,
I drifted away to a dear dead day,
When the dance, for me, was the sum of all pleasure ;
When my veins were rife with the fever of life,
When hope ran high as an inswept ocean,
And my heart's great gladness was almost madness,
As I floated off to the music's motion.

How little I cared for the world outside !
How little I cared for the dull day after !
The thought of trouble went up like a bubble,
And burst in a sparkle of mirthful laughter.
Oh ! and the beat of it, oh ! and the sweet of it —
Melody, motion, and young blood melted ;
The dancers swaying, the players playing,
The air song-deluged and music-pelted.

I knew no weariness, no, not I —

My step was as light as the waving grasses
That flutter with ease on the strong-armed breeze,
As it waltzes over the wild morasses.
Life was all sound and swing ; youth was a perfect thing ;
Night was the goddess of satisfaction.
Oh, how I tripped away, right to the edge of day !
Joy lay in motion, and rest lay in action.

I dance no more on the music's wave,
I yield no more to its wildering power,
That time has flown like a rose that is blown,
Yet life is a garden forever in flower.
Though storms of tears have watered the years,
Between to-day and the day departed,
Though trials have met me, and grief's waves wet me,
And I have been tired and trouble-hearted,
Though under the sod of a wee green grave,
A great, sweet hope in darkness perished,

Yet life, to my thinking, is a cup worth drinking,
A gift to be glad of, and loved, and cherished.
There is deeper pleasure in the slower measure
That Time's grand orchestra now is playing.
Its mellowed minor is sadder but finer,
And life grows daily more worth the living.

A PLEA.

Columbia, large-hearted and tender,
Too long for the good of your kin
You have shared your home's comfort and splendor
With all who have asked to come in.
The smile of your true eyes has lighted
The way to your wide-open door.
You have held out full hands, and invited
The beggar to take from your store.

Your overrun proud sister nations,
Whose offspring you help them to keep,
Are sending their poorest relations,
Their unruly vicious black sheep ;
Unwashed and unlettered you take them,
And lo ! we are pushed from your knee ;
We are governed by laws as they make them,
We are slaves in the land of the free.

Columbia, you know the devotion
Of those who have sprung from your soil;
Shall aliens, born over the ocean,
Dispute us the fruits of our toil?
Most noble and gracious of mothers,
Your children rise up and demand
That you bring us no more foster brothers,
To breed discontent in the land.

Be prudent before you are zealous,
Not generous only — but just.
Our hearts are grown wrathful and jealous
Toward those who have outraged your trust.
They jostle and crowd in our places,
They sneer at the comforts you gave.
We say, shut the door in their faces —
Until they have learned to behave !

In hearts that are greedy and hateful,
They harbor ill-will and deceit;

They ask for more favors, ungrateful
For those you have poured at their feet.
Rise up in your grandeur, and straightway
Bar out the bold, clamoring mass ;
Let sentinels stand at your gateway,
To see who is worthy to pass.

Give first to your own faithful toilers
The freedom our birthright should claim,
And take from these ruthless despoilers
The power which they use to our shame.
Columbia, too long you have dallied
With foes whom you feed from your store ;
It is time that your wardens were rallied,
And stationed outside the locked door.

THE ROOM BENEATH THE RAFTERS.

Sometimes when I have dropped to sleep,
 Draped in a soft luxurious gloom,
Across my drowsing mind will creep
 The memory of another room,
Where resinous knots in roof boards made
A frescoing of light and shade,
And sighing poplars brushed their leaves
Against the humbly sloping eaves.

Again I fancy, in my dreams,
 I'm lying in my trundle bed ;
I seem to see the bare old beams
 And unhewn rafters overhead.
The mud wasp's shrill falsetto hum
I hear again, and see him come
Forth from his dark-walled hanging house,
Dressed in his black and yellow blouse.

There, summer dawns, in sleep I stirred,
And wove into my fair dream's woof
The chattering of a martin bird,
Or rain-drops pattering on the roof.
Or half awake, and half in fear,
I saw the spider spinning near
His pretty castle where the fly
Should come to ruin by-and-by.

And there I fashioned from my brain
Youth's shining structures in the air.
I did not wholly build in vain,
For some were lasting, firm and fair.
And I am one who lives to say
My life has held more gold than gray,
And that the splendor of the real
Surpassed my early dream's ideal.

But still I love to wander back
To that old time and that old place;

To tread my way o'er memory's track,
And catch the early morning grace,
In that quaint room beneath the rafter,
That echoed to my childish laughter ;
To dream again the dreams that grew
More beautiful as they came true.

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

She was my dream's fulfilment and my joy,

 This lovely woman whom you call your wife.

You sported at your play, an idle boy,

 When I first felt the stirring of her life

Within my startled being. I was thrilled

With such intensity of love, it filled

The very universe ! But words are vain —

No man can comprehend that wild, sweet pain.

You smiled in childhood's slumber while I felt

 The agonies of labour ; and the nights

I, weeping, o'er the little sufferer knelt,

 You, wandering on through dreamland's fair delights,

Flung out your lengthening limbs and slept and grew ;

While I, awake, saved this dear wife for you.

She was my heart's loved idol and my pride.

 I taught her all those graces which you praise,

I dreamed of coming years, when at my side
She should lend lustre to my fading days,
Should cling to me (as she to you clings now),
The young fruit hanging to the withered bough.
But lo ! the blossom was so fair a sight,
You plucked it from me — for your own delight.

Well, you are worthy of her — oh, thank God —
And yet I think you do not realize
How burning were the sands o'er which I trod,
To bear and rear this woman you so prize.
It was no easy thing to see her go —
Even into the arms of the one she worshipped so.

How strong, how vast, how awful seems the power
Of this new love which fills a maiden's heart,
For one who never bore a single hour
Of pain for her ; which tears her life apart
From all its moorings, and controls her more
Than all the ties the years have held before ;

Which crowns a stranger with a kingly grace —
And gives the one who bore her — second place !

She loves me still ! and yet, were Death to say,
“Choose now between them !” you would be her
choice.

God meant it to be so — it is His way.

But can you wonder if, while I rejoice
In her content, this thought hurts like a knife —
“No longer necessary to her life !”

My pleasure in her joy is bitter sweet.

Your very goodness sometimes hurts my heart,
Because, for her, life's drama seems complete

Without the mother's oft-repeated part.
Be patient with me ! She was mine so long
Who now is yours. One must indeed be strong,
To meet the loss without the least regret.
And so, forgive me, if my eyes *are* wet.

AN OLD FAN.

(TO KITTY. HER REVERIE.)

It is soiled and quite passé,
Broken too, and out of fashion,
But it stirs my heart some way,
As I hold it here to-day,
With a dead year's grace and passion.
Oh, my pretty fan!

Precious dream and thrilling strain,
Rise up from that vanished season;
Back to heart and nerve and brain
Sweeps the joy as keen as pain,
Joy that asks no cause or reason.
Oh, my dainty fan!

Hopes that perished in a night
Gaze at me like spectral faces;

Grim despair and lost delight,
Sorrow long since gone from sight —
All are hiding in these laces.

Oh, my broken fan!

Let us lay the thing away —
I am sadder now, and older;
Fled the ball-room and the play —
You have had your foolish day,
And the night and life are colder.
Exit — little fan!

NO CLASSES !

No classes here ! Why, that is idle talk.

The village beau sneers at the country boor ;
The importuning mendicants who walk
Our cities' streets despise the parish poor.

The daily toiler at some noisy loom
Holds back her garments from the kitchen aid.
Meanwhile the latter leans upon her broom,
Unconscious of the bow the laundress made.

The grocer's daughter eyes the farmer's lass
With haughty glances ; and the lawyer's wife
Would pay no visits to the trading class,
If policy were not her creed in life.

The merchant's son nods coldly at the clerk ;
The proud possessor of a pedigree
Ignores the youth whose father rose by work ;
The title-seeking maiden scorns all three.

The aristocracy of blood looks down
 Upon the "nouveau riche"; and in disdain,
The lovers of the intellectual frown
 On both, and worship at the shrine of brain.

"No classes here," the clergyman has said ;
 "We are one family." Yet see his rage
And horror when his favorite son would wed
 Some pure and pretty player on the stage.

It is the vain but natural human way
 Of vaunting our weak selves, our pride, our worth !
Not till the long-delayed millennial day
 Shall we behold "no classes" on God's earth.

A GRAY MOOD.

As we hurry away to the end, my friend,
Of this sad little farce called existence,
We are sure that the future will bring one thing,
And that is the grave in the distance.
And so when our lives run along all wrong,
And nothing seems real or certain,
We can comfort ourselves with the thought (or not)
Of that spectre behind the curtain.

But we haven't much time to repine or whine,
Or to wound or jostle each other ;
And the hour for us each is to-day, I say,
If we mean to assist a brother.
And there is no pleasure that earth gives birth,
But the worry it brings is double ;
And all that repays for the strife of life,
Is helping some soul in trouble.

I tell you, if I could go back the track
To my life's morning hour,
I would not set forth seeking name or fame,
Or that poor bauble called power.
I would be like the sunlight, and live to give ;
I would lend but I would not borrow ;
Nor would I be blind and complain of pain,
Forgetting the meaning of sorrow.

This world is a vaporous jest at best,
Tossed off by the gods in laughter ;
And a cruel attempt at wit were it,
If nothing better came after.
It is reeking with hearts that ache and break,
Which we ought to comfort and strengthen,
As we hurry away to the end, my friend,
And the shadows behind us lengthen.

AT AN OLD DRAWER.

Before this scarf was faded,
What hours of mirth it knew !
How gayly it paraded
For smiling eyes to view !
The days were tinged with glory,
The nights too quickly sped,
And life was like a story
Where all the people wed.

Before this rosebud wilted,
How passionately sweet
The wild waltz swelled and lilted
In time for flying feet !
How loud the bassoons muttered !
The horns grew madly shrill ;
And, oh, the vows lips uttered
That hearts could not fulfill.

Before this fan was broken,
 Behind its lace and pearl
What whispered words were spoken —
 What hearts were in a whirl !
What homesteads were selected
 In Fancy's realm of Spain !
What castles were erected,
 Without a room for pain !

When this odd glove was mated,
 How thrilling seemed the play !
May be our hearts are sated —
 They tire so soon to-day.
Oh, shut away those treasures,
 They speak the dreary truth —
We have outgrown the pleasures
 And keen delights of youth.

THE OLD STAGE QUEEN.

Back in the box by the curtains shaded,
She sits alone by the house unseen ;
Her eye is dim, her cheek is faded,
She who was once the people's queen.

The curtain rolls up, and she sees before her
A vision of beauty and youth and grace.
Ah! no wonder all hearts adore her,
Silver-throated and fair of face.

Out of her box she leans and listens ;
Oh, is it with pleasure or with despair
That her thin cheek pales and her dim eye glistens,
While that fresh young voice sings the grand old air?

She is back again in the Past's bright splendor —
When life seemed worth living, and love a truth,
Ere Time had told her she must surrender
Her double dower of fame and youth.

It is she herself who stands there singing
To that sea of faces that shines and stirs ;
And the cheers on cheers that go up ringing
And rousing the echoes — are hers — all hers.

Just for one moment the sweet delusion
Quickens her pulses and blurs her sight,
And wakes within her that wild confusion
Of joy that is anguish and fierce delight.

Then the curtain goes down and the lights are gleaming
Brightly o'er circle and box and stall.
She starts like a sleeper who wakes from dreaming —
Her past lies under a funeral pall.

Her day is dead and her star descended,
Never to rise or shine again ;
Her reign is over — her Queenship ended —
A new name is sounded and sung by men.

All the glitter and glow and splendor,
All the glory of that lost day,
With the friends that seemed true, and the love that
seemed tender,
Why, what is it all but a dead bouquet?

She rises to go. Has the night turned colder?
The new Queen answers to call and shout;
And the old Queen looks back over her shoulder,
Then all unnoticed she passes out.

FAITH.

I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and sails ;
I shall believe the Hand which never fails,
From seeming evil worketh good for me ;
And though I weep because those sails are battered,
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered,
“ I trust in thee.”

I will not doubt, though all my prayers return
Unanswered from the still, white Realm above ;
I shall believe it is an all-wise Love
Which has refused those things for which I yearn ;
And though at times I cannot keep from grieving,
Yet the pure ardor of my fixed believing
Undimmed shall burn.

I will not doubt, though sorrows fall like rain,
And troubles swarm like bees about a hive ;

I shall believe the heights for which I strive
Are only reached by anguish and by pain ;
And though I groan and tremble with my crosses,
I yet shall see, through my severest losses,
The greater gain.

I will not doubt ; well anchored in the faith,
Like some staunch ship, my soul braves every gale,
So strong its courage that it will not fail
To breast the mighty unknown sea of Death.
Oh, may I cry when body parts with spirit,
“ I do not doubt,” so listening worlds may hear it,
With my last breath.

THE TRUE KNIGHT.

We sigh above historic pages,
Brave with the deeds of courtly men,
And wish those peers of middle ages
In our dull day could live again.
And yet no knight or Troubadour began
In chivalry with the American.

He does not frequent joust or tourney,
And flaunt his lady's colors there ;
But in the tedium of a journey,
He shows that deferential care —
That thoughtful kindness to the sex at large,
Which makes each woman feel herself his charge.

He does not challenge foes to duel,
To win his lady's cast-off glove,
But proves in ways less rash and cruel,
The truth and fervor of his love.

Not by bold deeds, but by his reverent mien,
He pays his public tribute to his Queen.

He may not shine with courtly graces,
But yet, his kind, respectful air
To woman, whatsoe'er her place is,
It might be well if kings could share.
So, for the chivalric true gentleman,
Give me, I say, our own American.

THE CITY.

I own the charms of lovely Nature ; still,
In human nature more delight I find.
Though sweet the murmuring voices of the rill,
I much prefer the voices of my kind.

I like the roar of cities. In the mart,
Where busy toilers strive for place and gain,
I seem to read humanity's great heart,
And share its hopes, its pleasures, and its pain.

The rush of hurrying trains that cannot wait,
The tread of myriad feet, all say to me :
“ You are the architect of your own fate ;
Toil on, hope on, and dare to do and be.”

I like the jangled music of the loud
Bold bells ; the whistle's sudden shrill reply ;
And there is inspiration in a crowd —
A magnetism flashed from eye to eye.

My sorrows all seem lightened and my joys
 Augmented when the comrade world walks near ;
Close to mankind my soul best keeps its poise.
 Give me the great town's bustle, strife, and noise,
 And let who will, hold **Nature's calm** more dear.

WOMAN.

Give us that grand word "woman" once again,
And let's have done with "lady": one's a term
Full of fine force, strong, beautiful, and firm,
Fit for the noblest use of tongue or pen;
And one's a word for lackeys. One suggests
The Mother, Wife, and Sister! One the dame
Whose costly robe, mayhap, gives her the name.
One word upon its own strength leans and rests;
The other minces tiptoe. Who would be
The perfect woman must grow brave of heart
And broad of soul to play her troubled part
Well in life's drama. While each day we see
The "perfect lady" skilled in what to do
And what to say, grace in each tone and act
('Tis taught in schools, but needs some native tact),
Yet narrow in her mind as in her shoe.
Give the first place then to the nobler phrase,
And leave the lesser word for lesser praise.

THE SOUL'S FAREWELL TO THE BODY

So we must part forever; and although
I long have beat my wings and cried to go,
Free from your narrow limiting control,
Forth into space, the true home of the soul,

Yet now, yet now that hour is drawing near,
I pause reluctant, finding you so dear.
All joys await me in the realm of God —
Must you, my comrade, moulder in the sod?

I was your captive, yet you were my slave;
Your prisoner, yet obedience you gave
To all my earnest wishes and commands.
Now to the worm I leave those willing hands

That toiled for me or held the books I read,
Those feet that trod where'er I wished to tread,
Those arms that clasped my dear ones, and the breast
On which one loved and loving heart found rest,

Those lips through which my prayers to God have risen,
Those eyes that were the windows to my prison.
From these, all these, Death's Angel bids me sever ;
Dear Comrade Body, fare thee well forever !

I go to my inheritance, and go
With joy that only the freed soul can know ;
Yet in my spirit wanderings I trust
I may sometimes pause near your sacred dust.

THIMBLE ISLANDS.

(OFF LONG ISLAND SOUND.)

Between the shore and the distant sky-lands,
Where a ship's dim shape seems etched on space,
There lies this cluster of lovely islands,
Like laughing mermaids grouped in grace.

I look out over the waves and wonder,
Are they not sirens who dwell in the sea?
When the tide runs high they dip down under,
Like mirthful bathers who sport in glee.

When the tide runs low they lift their shoulders
Above the billows and gayly spread
Their soft green garments along the boulders
Of grim gray granite that form their bed.

Close by the group, in sheltered places,
Many a ship at anchor lies,

And drinks the charm of their smiling faces,
As lovers drink smiles from maidens' eyes.

But true to the harsh and stern old ocean,
As maids in a harem are true to one,
They give him all of their hearts' devotion,
Though wooed forever by moon and sun.

A ship sails on that has bravely waded
Through foaming billows to sue in vain ;
A whip-poor-will flies that has serenaded
And sung unanswered his plaintive strain.

In the sea's great arms I see them lying,
Bright* and beaming and fond and fair,
While the jealous July day is dying
In a crimson fury of mad despair.

The desolate moon drifts slowly over,
And covers its face with the lace of a cloud,
While the sea, like a glad triumphant lover,
Clasps close his islands and laughs aloud.

MY GRAVE.

If, when I die, I must be buried, let
No cemetery engulf me — no lone grot,
Where the great palpitating world comes not,
Save when, with heart bowed down and eyelids wet,
It pays its last sad melancholy debt
To some outjourneying pilgrim. May my lot
Be rather to lie in some much-used spot,
Where human life, with all its noise and fret,
Throbs on about me. Let the roll of wheels,
With all earth's sounds of pleasure, commerce, love,
And rush of hurrying feet surge o'er my head.
Even in my grave I shall be one who feels
Close kinship with the pulsing world above;
And too deep silence would distress me, dead.

REFUTED.

“ Anticipation is sweeter than realization.”

It may be, yet I have not found it so.

In those first golden dreams of future fame

I did not find such happiness as came

When toil was crowned with triumph. Now I know

My words have recognition and will go

Straight to some listening heart my early aim

To win the idle glory of a name

Pales like a candle in the noonday's glow.

So with the deeper joys of which I dreamed :

Life yields more rapture than did childhood's fancies,

And each year brings more pleasure than I waited.

Friendship proves truer than of old it seemed,

And, all beyond youth's passion-hued romances,

Love is more perfect than anticipated.

THE LOST LAND.

There is a story of a beauteous land,
Where fields were fertile and where flowers were bright;
Where tall towers glistened in the morning light,
Where happy children wandered hand in hand,
Where lovers wrote their names upon the sand.
They say it vanished from all human sight,
The hungry sea devoured it in a night.
You doubt the tale? ah, you will understand;
For, as men muse upon that fable old,
They give sad credence always at the last,
However they have cavilled at its truth,
When with a tear-dimmed vision they behold,
Swift sinking in the ocean of the Past,
The lovely lost Atlantis of their Youth.

THE SOUTH.

A queen of indolence and idle grace,
 Robed in the vestments of a costly gown,
She turns the languor of her lovely face
 Upon progression with a lazy frown.
Her throne is built upon a marshy down ;
Malarial mosses wreath her like old lace ;
 With slim crossed feet, unshod and bare and brown,
She sits indifferent to the world's swift race.
Across the seas there stalks an ogre grim :
 Too languid she for even fear's alarms,
 While frightened nations rally in defence,
She lifts her smiling Creole eyes to him,
 And reaching out her shapely unwashed arms,
She clasps her rightful lover — Pestilence.

A SAILOR'S WIFE.

(HER MEMORY.)

Sun in my lattice, and sun on the sea
 (Oh, but the sun is fair),
And a sky of blue and a sea of green,
And a ship with a white, white sail between,
 And a light wind blowing free —
And back from the stern, and forth from the land,
The last farewell of a waving hand.

Mist on the window and mist on the sea
 (Oh, but the mist is gray),
And the weird, tall shape of a spectral mast
Gleams out of the fog like a ghost of my past,
 And the old hope stirs in me—
The old, old hope that warred with doubt,
While the years with the tides surged in and out.

Rain on my window and rain on the sea
 (Oh, but the rain is sad),
And only the dreams of a vanished barque
And a vanished youth shine through the dark,
 And torture the night and me.
But somewhere, I think, near some fair strand,
That lost ship lies with its waving hand.

LIFE'S JOURNEY.

As we speed out of youth's sunny station,
The track seems to shine in the light,
But it suddenly shoots over chasms
Or sinks into tunnels of night.
And the hearts that were brave in the morning
Are filled with repining and fears,
As they pause at the City of Sorrow
Or pass through the Valley of Tears.

But the road of this perilous journey
The hand of the Master has made ;
With all its discomforts and dangers,
We need not be sad or afraid.
Paths leading from light into darkness,
Ways plunging from gloom to despair,
Wind out through the tunnels of midnight
To fields that are blooming and fair.

Though the rocks and the shadows surround us,
 Though we catch not one gleam of the day,
Above us fair cities are laughing,
 And dipping white feet in some bay.
And always, eternal, forever,
 Down over the hills in the west,
The last final end of our journey,
 There lies the Great Station of Rest.

'Tis the Grand Central point of all railways,
 All roads unite here when they end ;
'Tis the final resort of all tourists,
 All rival lines meet here and blend.
All tickets, all mile-books, all passes,
 If stolen or begged for or bought,
On whatever road or division,
 Will bring you at last to this spot.

If you pause at the City of Trouble,
 Or wait in the Valley of Tears,

Be patient, the train will move onward,
And rush down the track of the years.
Whatever the place is you seek for,
Whatever your game or your quest,
You shall come at the last with rejoicing
To the beautiful City of Rest.

You shall store all your baggage of worries,
You shall feel perfect peace in this realm,
You shall sail with old friends on fair waters,
With joy and delight at the helm.
You shall wander in cool, fragrant gardens
With those who have loved you the best,
And the hopes that were lost in life's journey
You shall find in the City of Rest.

THE DISAPPOINTED.

There are songs enough for the hero
Who dwells on the heights of fame ;
I sing for the disappointed —
For those who missed their aim.

I sing with a tearful cadence
For one who stands in the dark,
And knows that his last, best arrow
Has bounded back from the mark.

I sing for the breathless runner,
The eager, anxious soul,
Who falls with his strength exhausted,
Almost in sight of the goal ;

For the hearts that break in silence,
With a sorrow all unknown,
For those who need companions,
Yet walk their ways alone.

There are songs enough for the lovers
Who share love's tender pain,
I sing for the one whose passion
Is given all in vain.

For those whose spirit comrades
Have missed them on the way,
I sing, with a heart o'erflowing,
This minor strain to-day.

And I know the Solar system
Must somewhere keep in space
A prize for that spent runner
Who barely lost the race.

For the plan would be imperfect
Unless it held some sphere
That paid for the toil and talent
And love that are wasted here.

FISHING.

Maybe this is fun, sitting in the sun,
With a book and parasol, as my Angler wishes,
While he dips his line in the ocean brine,
Under the impression that his bait will catch the fishes.

'Tis romantic, yes, but I must confess
Thoughts of shady rooms at home somehow seem more
inviting.

But I dare not move — “ Quiet, there, my love ! ”

Says my Angler, “ for I think a monster fish is biting.”
Oh, of course it's bliss, but how hot it is !

And the rock I'm sitting on grows harder every minute ;
Still my fisher waits, trying various baits,
But the basket at his side I see has nothing in it.

Oh, it's just the way to pass a July day,
Arcadian and sentimental, dreamy, idle, charming,

But how fierce the sunlight falls ! and the way that insect crawls

Along my neck and down my back is really quite alarming.

“ Any luck ? ” I gently ask of the angler at his task,

“ There’s something pulling at my line,” he says ; “ I’ve
almost caught it.”

But when, with blistered face, we our homeward steps retrace,

We take the little basket just as empty as we brought it.

A PIN.

Oh, I know a certain lady who is reckoned with the good,
Yet she fills me with more terror than a raging lion would.
The little chills run up and down my spine whene'er we meet,
Though she seems a gentle creature, and she's very trim
and neat.

And she has a thousand virtues and not one acknowledged sin,
But she is the sort of person you could liken to a pin.
And she pricks you and she sticks you in a way that can't
be said.

If you seek for what has hurt you — why, you cannot find
the head !

But she fills you with discomfort and exasperating pain.
If anybody asks you why, you really can't explain !
A pin is such a tiny thing, of that there is no doubt,
Yet when it's sticking in your flesh you're wretched till it's out.

She is wonderfully observing — when she meets a pretty girl,
She is always sure to tell her if her hair is out of curl;
And she is so sympathetic to her friend who's much admired,
She is often heard remarking, "Dear, you look so worn and
tired."

And she is an honest critic, for on yesterday she eyed
The new dress I was airing with a woman's natural pride,
And she said, "Oh, how becoming!" and then gently added, "it
Is really a misfortune that the basque is such a fit."

Then she said, "If you had heard me yester eve, I'm sure,
my friend,

You would say I was a champion who knows how to defend."
And she left me with the feeling — most unpleasant, I aver —
That the whole world would despise me if it hadn't been for her.

Whenever I encounter her, in such a nameless way
She gives me the impression I am at my worst that day.
And the hat that was imported (and which cost me half a
sonnet),
With just one glance from her round eyes becomes a Bowery
bonnet.

She is always bright and smiling, sharp and pointed for
a thrust.
Use does not seem to blunt her point, nor does she gather rust.
Oh ! I wish some hapless specimen of mankind would begin
To tidy up the world for me, by picking up this pin !

THE ACTOR.

Oh, man, with your wonderful dower,
Oh, woman, with genius and grace,
You can teach the whole world with your power,
If you are but worthy the place.
The stage is a force and a factor
In moulding the thought of the day,
If only the heart of the actor
Is high as the theme of the play.

No discourse or sermon can reach us
Through feeling to reason like you;
No author can stir us and teach us
With lessons as subtle and true.
Your words and your gestures obeying,
We weep or rejoice with your part,
And the player, behind all his playing,
He ought to be great as his art.

No matter what role you are giving,
No matter what skill you betray,
The everyday life you are living,
Is certain to color the play.
The thoughts we call secret and hidden
Are creatures of malice, in fact.
They steal forth unseen and unbidden,
And permeate motive and act.

The genius that shines like a comet
Fills only one part of God's plan,
If the lesson the world derives from it
Is marred by the life of the man.
Be worthy your work if you love it ;
The king should be fit for the crown ;
Stand high as your art, or above it,
And make us look up and not down.

ILLOGICAL.

She stood beside me while I gave an order
for a bonnet.

She shuddered when I said, "And put a
bright bird's wing upon it."

A member of the Audubon Society was she;
And cutting were her comments made on
worldly folks like me.

She spoke about the helpless birds we wickedly
were harming;

She quoted the statistics, and they really
were alarming;

She said God meant his little birds to sing
in trees and skies;
And there was pathos in her voice, and
tears were in her eyes.

“ Oh, surely in this beauteous world you
can find lovely things
Enough to trim your hats,” she said, “ with-
out the dear birds’ wings.”

I sat beside her that same day, in her
own house at dinner,
Angelic being that she was, to entertain
a sinner !

Her well-appointed table groaned
beneath the ample spread
Course followed appetizing course, and
hunger sated fled ;

But still my charming hostess urged, "Do
have a *reed-bird*, dear,
They are so delicate and sweet
at this time of the year."

NEW YEAR.

I saw on the hills of the morning,
The form of the New Year arise,
He stood like a statue adorning
The world with a background of skies.
There were courage and grace in his beautiful face,
And hope in his glorious eyes.

“I come from Time’s boundless forever,”
He said, with a voice like a song.
“I come as a friend to endeavor,
I come as a foe to all wrong.
To the sad and afraid I bring promise of aid,
And the weak I will gird and make strong.

“I bring you more blessings than terrors,
I bring you more sunlight than gloom,

I tear out your page of old errors,
And hide them away in Time's tomb.
I reach you clean hands, and lead on to the lands
Where the lilies of peace are in bloom."

NEW YEAR.

As the old year sinks down in Time's ocean,
Stand ready to launch with the new,
And waste no regrets, no emotion,
As the masts and the spars pass from view.
Weep not if some treasures go under,
And sink in the rotten ship's hold,
That blithe bonny barque sailing yonder
May bring you more wealth than the old.

For the world is forever improving,
All the past is not worth one to-day,
And whatever deserves our true loving,
Is stronger than death or decay.
Old love, was it wasted devotion ?
Old friends, were they weak or untrue ?
Well, let them sink there in mid ocean,
And gaily sail on to the new.

Throw overboard toil misdirected,
 Throw overboard ill-advised hope,
With aims which, your soul has detected,
 Have self as their centre and scope.
Throw overboard useless regretting
 For deeds which you cannot undo,
And learn the great art of forgetting
 Old things which embitter the new.

Sing who will of dead years departed,
 I shroud them and bid them adieu,
And the song that I sing, happy-hearted,
 Is a song of the glorious new.

NOW.

One looks behind him to some vanished time
And says, "Ah, I was happy then, alack !
I did not know it was my life's best prime —
Oh, if I could go back !"

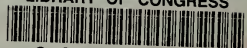
Another looks, with eager eyes aglow,
To some glad day of joy that yet will dawn,
And sighs, "I shall be happy then, I know.
Oh, let me hurry on."

But I — I look out on my fair To-day ;
I clasp it close and kiss its radiant brow.
Here with the perfect present let me stay,
For I am happy now !





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